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INTERPRETIVE REPORT

Reds Absolved in Bhutan Plot

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NEW DELHI, May 18.—The mystery of the murdered Bhutanese premier is slowly becoming unravelled.

Yesterday, Brig. Bahadur Namgyal, former head of the Bhutanese army, was executed by a firing squad for being involved in the assassination April 5 of Premier Jigme Dorji.

Enough is now known here by diplomatic sources to discount any direct Red Chinese involvement in the slaying of Mr. Dorji, 44, Bhutan's pro-Indian premier. Instead, most observers here place Mr. Dorji's death within the pattern of clan murders and palace intrigues that have occurred almost continuously in the Eastern Himalayan mountain kingdom the past two centuries.

So far between 30 and 65 Bhutanese have been arrested for plotting Mr. Dorji's assassination and a military coup to take over control of Bhutan. Most of the arrested men represented traditionalist forces who resented the late Premier's attempts to modernize Bhutan with India's help.

Reports Disproved

Suspicious that Peking may have engineered Mr. Dorji's murder gained currency here after an official Indian foreign ministry spokesman told reporters the alleged assassin, Jam-bay, a son of the palace cook,

had been a Chinese prisoner of war during the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962.

This was later denied by army sources. The spokesman also reminded reporters China had laid claim to Bhutan as one of the five fingers of her Tibetan hand.

Before this fresh Chinese scare gained momentum, Prime Minister Nehru intervened. He is known to be concerned over foreign skepticism that India has too often cried wolf over the Chinese menace the past 16 months.

Mr. Nehru's intervention also reflects a division within the Indian government toward its Bhutan policy. One group favors extending Indian control over the small kingdom. Another faction, led by Mr. Nehru, supports India's present recognition of Bhutan's sovereignty as a semi-independent kingdom which "consults" New Delhi on foreign relations and defense.

India Aids Bhutan

The success of India's present happy relations with Bhutan's rulers—though it is geographically, culturally and racially linked with Tibet and not India—is a monument to Mr. Nehru's policy.

Bhutan does not permit Indian troops within its borders but relies heavily on nearly 100 Indians who train its 20,000-man army and provide Bhutan's only teachers, doctors and road engineers.

Since 1961, India has loaned Bhutan \$36.7 million for a 5-year program of roads, hydro-electric power and education.

The Indians are building 800 miles of new roads, but Bhutan's 700,000 people are so reluctant to leave their traditional agricultural and hunting vocations, the government has had to rely partly on conscript labor for a 30,000-man working force.

Mr. Dorji, as premier, functioned more as a roving ambassador, while Bhutan's 34-year-old ruler, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, ran the country. But both men, and Mr. Dorji's brother Lhendup who probably will succeed as premier, and a sister, Tashi, are closely identified by Bhutan's old guard as the instruments of unwelcome change.


Enlightened Ruler

From his soaring castle-fortress, the young king has freed 5,000 slaves, abolished prostration in his presence, set up 70 schools where none existed before and abolished polyandry and restricted polygamy to three wives.

Amidst a court where lamas

blow trumpets, beat gongs, flutter prayer flags and wear chain mail and where some of his ancestors were murdered by having ceremonial white silk scarves stuffed down their throats, King Wangchuk is trying to bring his feudal land into the 20th century.

There are no towns, banks, stores or electricity. Until recently, condemned murderers were sewn alive into yak skins and thrown in a river, and the only public entertainments are devil dances and archery tournaments.

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